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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Washington, DC) – Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL) met with President Barack Obama and Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) at the White House today to discuss plans for moving immigration reform legislation forward this year before Election Day. The meeting comes one day after the three Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus laid out their fall strategy to get the DREAM Act immigration bill approved as a starting point for broader immigration reform (see the release from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus [here](#)

) and one day after President Obama, in a speech to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute's annual awards gala said: "You have every right to keep the heat on me and keep the heat on the Democrats, and I hope you do," referring to immigration. "But don't forget who is standing with you, and who is standing against you."

"I think the White House, the Democrats, and the allies that support serious immigration reform

are going on offense and the President is our quarterback," Rep. Gutierrez said after the White House meeting Thursday. "I have been pushing hard to get us all pointing in the same direction on this issue and now with the White House standing with us and the Senate poised to act, I think we are seeing that effort begin to bear fruit. There are at least 218 votes in the House to pass the DREAM Act. The House is ready to act. We call on the Senate to pass the bill."

Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) announced Tuesday that there would be a clean up or down vote on the DREAM Act in the Senate as part of the Defense Department reauthorization bill in the coming week or two. Sen. Menendez announced this week that he intends to introduce a comprehensive immigration reform bill in the Senate as soon as possible. Today, the three Members of Congress also spoke to the President about the 400,000 deportations occurring each year and the need to concentrate on only serious violent criminals. At least half of those deportations are non-criminals and are splitting families apart.

"This was a big day, a big week and the next couple of weeks will be a turning point for immigration reform," Rep. Gutierrez said. "We know the clock is ticking, we know Republicans are being pressured to say 'no' to everything -- including sensible Democratic solutions that solve big national problems -- but we also know the country wants and needs a secure, legal, and fair immigration system that protects and serves the American people and strengthens the economy. Getting a vote on the DREAM Act is a step in that process that could help a lot of very talented young people achieve their American Dream."

Senator Menendez, Chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, is a key leader on immigration and the only Hispanic Member of the U.S. Senate. Rep. Velázquez is the Chairwoman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC).

For all of his 18 years in the House, Rep. Gutierrez has been the leading voice calling for comprehensive immigration reform, halting deportations that rip families apart, providing relief for undocumented immigrant youth brought to the U.S., and instituting a fair and generous immigration policy for the nation. He introduced the first bill aimed at helping young undocumented immigrants gain access to higher education and legal status, a bill which was the forerunner of the DREAM Act that the Senate will consider in the coming week or two. On May 1 of this year, when DREAM Act students marched from Florida to Washington to call attention to the plight of immigrant youth, Rep. Gutierrez was arrested at a demonstration outside the White House to support their advocacy and to take their place symbolically so that they would not risk deportation if arrested themselves.

In 2005, he was part of the bipartisan team that crafted landmark immigration reform legislation that was approved by the Senate in 2006 but blocked by House Republican Leaders. That team included Senators Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and John McCain (R-AZ) and two House Republicans from Arizona and Rep. Gutierrez has continued to work with Members of Congress in both parties to craft and introduce subsequent bills.

In 2009 he launched a tour of American cities called the "Family Unity" tour to focus on the massive deportation program breaking families apart and the inability of family members to immigrate to the U.S. legally. The tour brought the stories of immigrant communities to light and created a platform for national immigration reform allies like Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and civil rights icon Rep. John Lewis (D-GA) to speak out on the issue. This effort brought out tens of thousands of immigrants across the country and kept the pressure on the (then) new Obama Administration to follow-through on immigration reform.

In 2009, Rep. Gutierrez, who chairs the Immigration Task Force of the CHC, crafted the Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity Act, a comprehensive immigration reform bill based largely on his previous bipartisan immigration reform bills. The bill, known as [CIR-ASAP](#) (H.R. 4321), has 103 House co-sponsors and is supported by the CHC.

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